

First Peter 2:13-17
Godward submission in the political realm

Purpose: to help listeners understand the role of the State and our God-given responsibility to the State

Introduction: Today we will examine the first passage on specific relationships Christians have: citizenship (2:13-17), then a look at employment (2:18-25) and family (3:1-7). As we see the rise of Statism (increasing authority of the government at the expense of individual liberty) in our host country, what should our response be as Christians, who are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20)? In what specific good deeds (2:12) should Christians be engaged as dual-citizens?

- 1) God wants us to SUBMIT to the State—2:13-16 ¹³ *Therefore, submit [aor. pass. impv. ὑποτάσσω] yourselves ...*
 - a) What does it mean to submit to the State?—2:13
 - i) Voluntarily renouncing my will for the will of my God-ordained authority, recognizing my exact God-assigned place in society, embracing my dependent status toward God and His delegated authorities over me, and making my strengths and abilities available to their service.
 - ii) It involves accepting their commands, fulfilling their conditions, seeking to please my superiors, while granting them the honor that is due them in their God-assigned position.
 - iii) But ultimately this submission is limited, which we will see shortly.
 - b) What should motivate Christians to submit to the State?—2:13
 - i) Demonstrate Christ-centered loyalty—*for the Lord's* [κύριος] *sake* [διά],
 - (1) Submit for Jesus' sake by following His example before government, as demonstrated in the Gospel accounts.
 - c) To whom are Christians to submit themselves? *to every* [πᾶς] *creature* [κτίσις] (of the God Who delegates authority) *among people* [ἄνθρωπινος] (i.e. every creature that is human)
 - The word “creation” in the NT is always used of God, not man
 - i) To the creature with **supreme** authority—*whether to a king* [βασιλεύς]
 - (1) *as* [ὥς] *one having authority* [ὑπερέχω]
 - (a) Their authority is from God the Creator: Proverbs 21:1; Daniel 2:20-21, 37; 4:34-37; John 19:10-11; Romans 13:1-5 (9 years before 1st Peter)
 - (2) For these readers, this would have been Emperor Nero (54-68 AD).
 - ii) To creatures with **subordinate** authority—¹⁴ *or to governors* [ἡγεμόνων]
 - (1) *as* [ὥς] *those being sent* [pres. pass. ptc. πέμπω] *by* [διά] *him* (the king) *to* [εἰς] ... (do 2 things)
 - (a) Negatively—*render justice* [ἐκδίκησις] *on evildoers* [κακοποιός]
 - Not only as a deterrent, but also carrying out retribution. This is an example of God using secondary-causation to restrain sin.

- This is a witness against the evil tendencies of human nature.
- Christians should not seek vengeance and take the law into their own hands.
- (b) Positively—*but* [δε] *praise* [ἐπαινος] *on doers of good* [ἀγαθοποιός],
 - The public commendation of beneficial citizens who have won the ruler's approval.
- (2) This includes Biblical rulers such as: the Herods, Pilate, Felix, Festus
- (3) Government should not be involved in social services, education, healthcare, etc. When they do so, they have overstepped their bounds.
- (4) No government that consistently rewards evil and punishes good can survive long, because evil is ultimately self-destructive. (ECB, 12:233)
- iii) Submission only to **legitimate/valid** authority—Acts 4:19-20; 5:28-29
- d) One of the results of Christians submitting to the State—2:15
 - i) We may silence our accusers—¹⁵ *because* [ὅτι] *thus* [οὕτω] *is* [pres. act. ind. εἰμί] *the will* [θέλημα] *of God* [θεός], ... *you*^{pl} *will be muzzling* [pres. act. inf. φιμώω] *the ignorance of the unwise people* [ἄφρων ἀγνοσία ἄνθρωπος].
 - (1) Perhaps the accusations from 2:12.
 - (2) This is the revealed will of God, not His unrevealed will.
 - (3) Peter knew Jesus had muzzled both the Sadducees (Matthew 22:34) and demons (Mark 1:25)
 - (4) When? *while doing good* [pres. act. ptc. ἀγαθοποιέω],
 - (a) The best defense against slanderous criticism is good behavior.
 - e) How are we to submit ourselves to the State?—2:16
 - i) Positively—¹⁶ (Submit) *As* [ὥς] *free men* [ἐλεύθερος]
 - (1) Set free by God from sin, Satan, and selfish desires through Christ to serve God (John 8:32).
 - ii) Negatively—*yet* [καί] *do not* [μή] *have* [pres. act. ptc. ἔχω] *the liberty* [ἐλευθερία]
 - (1) *as* [ὥς] *a disguise* [ἐπικάλυμμα] *for wickedness* [κακία]
 - (a) With which we are tempted (2:1)
 - (2) *but* [ἀλλά] *as* [ὥς] *bondslaves* [δοῦλος] *of God* [θεός].
 - (a) Remember how Jesus is God's servant (Matthew 12:18; Isaiah 42:1).
- 2) God tells us what doing good (2:14-15) looks like in the various relationships of real life—2:17
 - a) Two urgent commands—2:17a
 - i) SOCIALLY, God's image-bearers are to be honored—¹⁷ Honor [aor. act. impv. τιμάω] **all** [πάντες] (people).
 - ii) RELIGIOUSLY, God's family is to be loved—Love [aor. act. impv. ἀγαπάω] **the brotherhood** [ἀδελφότης].
 - b) Two ongoing commands—2:17b (from Proverbs 24:21?)
 - i) SPIRITUALLY, God's awesomeness is to be acknowledged—Keep on being in awe of [pres. dep. impv. φοβέω] **God** [θεός].

- (1) Remember Jesus' striking words in Matthew 10:28.
- ii) POLITICALLY, God's assigned governing authority is to be honored—Keep on honoring [pres. act. impv. τιμάω] **the king** [βασιλεύς].
- (1) The one who uprooted you and deported you to this region.
- 3) Looking back:
- a) It is not Christian to advocate the overthrow of a State in order to set it straight. Christians are opposed to revolution and anarchy because they recognize God as a God of law and order. Thus, Christians should not participate in the so-called Occupy Movement of our day. Rebellious conduct by Christians brings dishonor to Christ.
- b) The State is not the highest authority. There are some things the State has no right to do, and therefore submission has its limitations. However, under normal circumstances believers should actively support civil government in promoting law and order. (Hiebert, 164)
- i) Beware of the flesh's temptation to attempt to live independently of God's ordained authority. The Libertarian party may be a temptation to some Christians.
- c) Compare all of this with what Paul said to Titus on the island of Crete (3:1-7)

Take-home truth: Glorify God as you submit to the government He has given to you.